

# State Representative **Craig Fry**



## *Session Report*



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# INDIANA'S NEW BUDGET

## School Funding Cuts and Increased Property Taxes

The new state budget did not receive the support of any Democrat legislators in the Indiana General Assembly. **This 2005-2007 budget bill raises property taxes by \$1BILLION and at the same time cuts education funding to 140 school districts in Indiana.** What's even more offensive is that Gov. Daniels found the resources to build a new Colts stadium and convention center in Indianapolis. The new budget cuts will affect the Penn-Harris-Madison, Baugo and Mishawaka School Districts and will drive the Indianapolis Public Schools into bankruptcy.

Indiana has been recognized for having the highest educational standards in the country, but this legislature passed a budget that raises property taxes and gives 237 school corporations less funding than the rate of inflation. **As a result, teachers will be laid off and academic programs cut,** which will force many Indiana schools into improvement categories that could lead to state and federal sanctions. Almost all of the additional school funding came

from increasing local property taxes.

The 2005-2007 budget bill reverses the prior legislative promise of just three years ago, and that was to provide more state funding to combat raising local property taxes. This legislation reverses Gov. Otis Bowen's 1972 commitment to have the state fund 20% of all the local property taxes which will contribute to the 20% to 25% increase in our property taxes.

Also, a new state law will automatically grant local tax abatements to any Indiana company who wants to take advantage of the property tax cut. The downside of this law is that it "shifts" that company's tax break costs to us, the homeowners. **I voted "NO" on all legislation that raised local property or local income taxes.** It's a shame that as history records the results of the recently concluded legislative session, the only thing that stands out is the unfairness and exploitation of the people who work every day and are willing to pay their fair share of the tax burden.

## Daylight-Saving Time

Much of the media attention this session focused on Daylight-Saving Time (DST). As the result of legislation the General Assembly approved only by very close votes, most of Indiana will observe Eastern Daylight-Saving Time beginning next April. This will mean **St. Joseph and Elkhart Counties will be on New York time, not Chicago, all year long.**

I received numerous letters, emails and telephone calls on this topic. The majority of constituents who contacted me on the issue were opposed to Daylight-Saving Time and, if forced, were overwhelmingly in favor of Indiana being placed in the Central Time Zone. **For all the above reasons, I voted "NO" on DST.**

The legislation requires the governor to petition the U.S. Department of Transportation to hold hearings to determine the appropriate time zone in which Indiana should

be placed. Governor Daniels expressed a clear desire during his campaign that he preferred the Central Time Zone. He has now reversed course and petitioned for the hearings without stating a preference, but the federal Department of Transportation refused to hold hearings to let people express their opinions. If you want to share your opinion with Governor Daniels, you may contact him at:

Governor Mitch Daniels  
200 West Washington Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46204  
Telephone: 317-232-4567  
Email: [mdaniels@gov.in.gov](mailto:mdaniels@gov.in.gov)



*Rep. Fry listens to debate on the floor of the House Chamber.*

# Voter ID Proposal a Flawed Approach to Reform



*Rep. Craig Fry questions the author of the Voter ID bill during a legislative committee meeting.*

The General Assembly passed a partisan plan to require individuals to show state-issued identification in order to vote on election day.

Upon first glance, this sounds like a good idea. Present your dri-

ver's license and you can vote. Who couldn't meet that requirement?

Well, just a few examples include:

- **A woman whose marital status has changed** but has not updated her driver's license or reconciled her last name with her voter registration;
- **A person whose driver's license or identification card was lost or stolen** just prior to election day and cannot timely gather the appropriate identification to obtain a replacement from the BMV;
- A person whose driver's license was confiscated by law enforcement for certain driving offenses just prior to election day;
- **Someone new to the area** that does not have an opportunity to obtain a certified birth certification from his or her home state in a timely manner;
- **The elderly, disabled, and persons living in a nursing home** that do not have transportation to a BMV to obtain a state-issued identification card, especially in those areas where the governor's administration has closed BMV branches.

This new law has the potential to impact everyone's family at some time. **Some Hoosiers will be denied the right to vote.**

The law was proposed by the Secretary of State and promoted by the majority party as a way to eliminate fraud and restore honesty to the electoral process. It does neither. **Alleged voting irregularities to date have involved absentee ballots, which this law fails to address.**

**Requiring state-issued identification provides a false sense of security.** The polling places will not be equipped with the necessary computer links to the state database to verify your driver's license or identification card to ensure that the person presenting the identification is the actual card holder. Losing your driver's license takes on a whole new concern now. Also, with today's technology and internet access to websites offering IDs, a person can easily obtain a false ID that is not easily discernable from the real thing. (Living in a college community we have all heard about the availability of false IDs!)

Opponents of the legislation argued that requiring a driver's license or state-issued ID card would amount to a poll tax. Proponents decided it would fix that argument by letting those 18 or older obtain a free ID card from the BMV. **HOWEVER**, one of the primary documents required for either a driver's license or ID card (and other forms of primary documents) is a birth certificate, for which there is a fee in most states, including Indiana. Some individuals and families cannot afford the cost of a birth certificate. There are also some Hoosiers who were born at home or whose records were destroyed in fires. **In these circumstances it takes more than a trip to the local BMV to obtain an ID.**



The BMV has strict requirements for obtaining a driver's license or state-issued ID card, which are necessary to ensure the integrity of the documents and to meet the increasing federal mandates. I urge you to view the documents necessary for a driver's license or identification card so you will be prepared in the event you or a family member needs to obtain one of these forms of identification prior to election day. You can visit the BMV's website at [www.in.gov/bmv](http://www.in.gov/bmv).

**I still believe that driving is a privilege, voting is a constitutional right.** The two should not be confused.



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# New Booster Seat Law Effective July 1



As of July 1st, children up to age eight will now have to be in a child

restraint system, or booster seat, in order to comply with a new state law.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports that while infants and toddlers are being protected by restraints in vehicles in increasing numbers, appropriate protection for four to seven year olds has declined.

Legislation was passed during the 2004 legislative session which will help protect young children from tragic accidents involving improperly fitting seat belts by requiring children up to age eight to be in a booster seat unless it is reasonably determined that the child won't fit into one.

According to NHTSA guidelines, children are ready to move to an adult safety belt when they can

place their back firmly against the back of the seat with their knees bent over the seat cushion. The lap belt must fit low and tight across the child's upper thighs, and the shoulder belt should rest over the shoulder and across the chest.

If a person is found in violation of this law, a \$25 fine will be issued.

However, the driver can subsequently show possession of an appropriate system and all fines will be dropped.

Violations of this law do not count against a habitual violator status by the Bureau of Motor Vehicles and will not result in any points against a violator's license.

One other change as of July 1 is that children ages eight to sixteen must use a regular seat belt at all times, no matter where in the vehicle they are sitting.



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